

cooperated with Russia in these negotiations. Because the Czech Republic and Poland fall within the boundaries of former Russian influence, U.S. actions with regard to the GMD have been perceived by Russia as an intrusion. There can be no doubt that U.S. efforts to impose the GMD are perceived as an obstruction to the diplomatic ties between our nations.

Assertions made by the Administration that the U.S. ICBM system could be used to protect the European Union reflect a flawed policy. If the Administration is concerned about the threat of ICBM attack on Europe it should cooperate with the international community to address these concerns instead of pursuing even more unilateral international policing. NATO is a better forum in which to address these concerns.

The timing of Secretary Rice's trip to sign the agreement is also questionable. The Conference Report for the FY 2008 Department of Defense, DOD, authorization requires an independent assessment of the two stage interceptors as well as an independent analysis to assess alternatives to the European GMD. The assessment will not be released until after Secretary Rice's trip. If the assessment finds the GMD and the interceptors to be as unnecessary, unviable, and counterproductive to diplomacy as I have outlined in this letter, it will make it difficult to turn back. Additionally, the December 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on Iran states that Tehran halted its nuclear program in 2003 and as such, reaffirms the lack of an impending nuclear threat to the United States from Iran. This further confirms that there is no urgent need to sign a formal agreement with the Czech Republic in June.

The viability, necessity and prudence of the fulfillment of a formal agreement with both the Czech Republic and Poland on the European GMD are called into question. Furthermore, this \$4 billion project will be solely funded by U.S. taxpayers. I urge you to cancel the upcoming trip by Secretary Rice to the Czech Republic and instead focus on the more pressing diplomatic efforts that are needed to protect U.S. security through our relationships with the international community.

Sincerely,

DENNIS J. KUCINICH,
Member of Congress.

CELEBRATING ISRAEL'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. TODD TIAHRT

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Mr. TIAHRT. Madam Speaker, congratulations to the people of Israel and their forebearers on the 60th anniversary of the reestablishment of the State of Israel. Born out of genocide and conflict, the modern State of Israel has developed into a free, democratic and prosperous country. An unfailing ally of the United States, Israel is a beacon of freedom and religious tolerance in the Middle East. I am honored to strongly support the modern State of Israel and reaffirm the bonds of close friendship and cooperation between the United States and Israel.

The narrow strip of land that now constitutes modern Israel has been important to the Jewish people for four millennia, and the first Jewish kingdom was established in this region over 3,000 years ago. Although forced to emigrate from the historical Jewish homeland over

the centuries, the Jewish people have continuously yearned for and often returned to their home. History shows that waves of Jewish people returned to the Holy Land at the very least during the 12th, 15th, 16th, and 18th centuries. Large-scale migration back to Israel started in the late 1800s and continues through today.

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly formally approved the partitioning of the British Mandate of Palestine and the creation of a Jewish State. On May 14, 1948, the people of Israel proclaimed the establishment of the modern State of Israel. Under the leadership of President Harry S. Truman, the United States was the first nation to recognize the State of Israel and establish full diplomatic relations.

Over the course of three wars, countless military operations, constant terrorism, and unjustified diplomatic and economic boycotts, Israel's existence has been continuously threatened. But, through it all, the Jewish people have remained vigilant and continue to build a strong and vibrant state.

Today, Israel has one of the leading economies in the Middle East, while maintaining a strong commitment to human rights, freedom of speech, press and religion, and democratic values. With open and free elections, and an independent judiciary, Israel remains the most democratic country in the region.

Since the creation of the modern State of Israel, the hallmark of the relationship with the United States has been a strong friendship. Israel has been a trusted military ally and partner for six decades. The close relationship between our governments and continued military assistance are essential for promoting democracy and peace in the Middle East and throughout the world.

In times of humanitarian need or global crisis, the United States can always count on Israel to stand close and provide assistance. From contributing search-and-rescue teams following the 1998 bombings of the American Embassies in east Africa, to providing humanitarian aid following the 2005 devastation of the Gulf Coast from a series of hurricanes, the State of Israel has always been a stalwart friend to the American people. The United States must remain committed to supporting the State of Israel.

It is important to honor this historic milestone. The United States Congress and the American people look forward to continued growth and success of the State of Israel. I ask that all my colleagues honor this important anniversary.

A TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE OF ERNEST S. KINNEY

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Mr. COSTA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the life of Ernest S. Kinney of Fresno, California who recently passed away at 63 years of age. He leaves behind a loving wife, Marion, two children and several grandchildren.

Mr. Kinney was born and raised in Bishop, California. In 1962 he went to Fresno State to play football, and in 1965 he served as stu-

dent body president and President of the 16th State College Student President's Association. Upon graduating from Fresno State he joined the U.S. Marine Corp in 1968 and served as a Captain until 1971.

After his military career Mr. Kinney attended the San Joaquin College of Law while working as a social worker during the day. He graduated as part of the school's second graduating class in 1975 and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2007.

After only two and a half short years Ernest established his own private practice in 1978 and formed the Ernest S. Kinney Law Corporation. During more than three decades of practicing law he gained the respect of the entire community. He was tough and dedicated and admired by his colleagues, and he will be remembered mostly for his colorful character and his skills in the courtroom.

Ernest enjoyed the simple things in life like going to football and basketball games with friends, going to the beach with his grandchildren and lunches with his friends. He had passion and he loved people.

It goes without saying that Mr. Ernest Kinney was one of kind. His commitment to family and clients will forever live in the lives of the people he touched. His passion for justice under the law will be remembered by all who knew him. I am honored and humbled to join his family in celebrating the life of this amazing man who will never be forgotten.

INTRODUCTION OF THE SAVING ENERGY THROUGH PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ACT OF 2008

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, together with Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Ranking Member JOHN L. MICA and Highways and Transit Subcommittee Chairman PETER A. DEFAZIO, I am pleased to introduce H.R. 6052, the "Saving Energy Through Public Transportation Act of 2008."

We are introducing this bill to promote energy savings through increased public transportation use in the United States. Recently, public transportation has experienced a renaissance in American cities and towns. In 2007, Americans took over 10.3 billion trips on public transportation, the highest level in 50 years. Public transportation use is up 32 percent since 1995, a figure that is more than double the growth rate of the population and is substantially over the growth rate for the vehicle miles traveled on our Nation's highways for that same period. All around the country, voters continue to approve state and local ballot initiatives to support public transportation, even when it means local taxes will be raised or continued.

As the price of gas approaches \$4 a gallon, even more commuters are choosing to ride the train or the bus to work rather than drive alone in their cars. Transit systems in metropolitan areas are reporting increases in ridership of 5, 10, and even 15 percent over last year's figures. Some of the biggest increases in ridership are occurring in many areas in the South and West where new bus and light rail lines have been built in the last few years.

Meeting this impressive new demand for public transportation services is no small task for our transit agencies. While recordbreaking numbers of commuters are riding transit, the cost of fuel and power for public transportation has sharply increased, and the slowing economy means less local money is available to increase or even maintain transit services. This bill provides much needed support to public transportation agencies and increases incentives for commuters to choose transit options, thereby reducing their transportation-related energy consumption and reliance on foreign oil.

A primary objective of H.R. 6052, the "Saving Energy Through Public Transportation Act of 2008," is to reduce the United States dependence on foreign oil by encouraging more people to use public transportation. According to a recent study, if Americans used public transit at the same rate as Europeans—for roughly 10 percent of their daily travel needs—the United States could reduce its dependence on imported oil by more than 40 percent, nearly equal to the 550 million barrels of crude oil that we import from Saudi Arabia each year.

To increase public transportation use across the United States, H.R. 6052, the "Saving Energy Through Public Transportation Act of 2008," authorizes \$1.7 billion in funding over 2 years for transit agencies nationwide that are temporarily reducing transit fares or expanding transit services to meet the needs of the growing number of transit commuters. The National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission, established to develop a national transportation vision to address surface transportation needs for the next 50 years, calls for a total annual investment of between \$26 billion to \$46 billion for public transportation. We consider this bill an important first step in increasing our investment in public transit infrastructure.

H.R. 6052 also increases the Federal share for clean fuel and alternative fuel transit bus, ferry or locomotive-related equipment or facilities, thereby assisting transit agencies in reducing transportation-related emissions. In fiscal years 2008 and 2009, the increased Federal share for these activities is 100 percent of the net capital cost of the project. Public transportation use is estimated to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 37 million metric tons annually. When a solo commuter switches from a single occupancy vehicle to a transit commute, this single mode shift can reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 20 pounds per day—more than 4,800 pounds in a year. This provision will allow American commuters to further decrease their greenhouse gas emissions.

H.R. 6052 also extends the Federal transit pass benefits program to require that all Federal agencies offer transit passes to Federal employees throughout the United States. Current law requires that all Federal agencies within the National Capital Region implement a transit pass fringe benefits program and offer employees transit passes. This requirement originated from Executive Order 13150, signed by President Clinton on April 21, 2000. The Executive Order also required the Department of Transportation, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of Energy to implement a nationwide 3-year pilot transit pass benefit program for all qualified Federal employees of those agencies.

Data from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority covering the first 3 years of the National Capital Region transit pass program show that more than 15,500 automobiles were eliminated from roads in the Washington, DC, area as a result of Federal employees shifting their travel mode away from single occupancy vehicle, SOV, use to public transportation use for commuting to work. The Department of Transportation estimated that emissions and energy savings from this mode shift included the reduction of more than 8 million gallons of gasoline, nearly 40,000 tons of carbon dioxide, and over 675 tons of carbon monoxide for each of the 3 years that they studied. DOT also studied the results of the nationwide pilot program and found that, within the three covered agencies, 11 percent of the participants shifted their travel mode away from SOV use to public transportation use for commuting to work, again producing marked energy and emissions savings, reduced congestion and cleaner air.

The Department of Transportation has determined that both the National Capital Region transit benefits program and the nationwide pilot program produce marked energy and emissions savings, congestion reductions, and cleaner air, and recommends that the transit pass benefits program be extended to Federal employees nationwide. This provision will implement the Department's recommendation by providing more Federal employees the incentives to choose transit options, thereby reducing their transportation-related energy consumption and reliance on foreign oil.

H.R. 6052 also creates a pilot program to allow the amount expended by private providers of public transportation by vanpool for the acquisition of vans to be used as the non-Federal share for matching Federal transit funds in five communities. Under current law, only local public funds may be used as local match; this pilot program would allow private funds to be used in limited circumstances.

The provision will require the private providers of vanpool services to use revenues they receive in providing public transportation, in excess of their operating costs, for the purpose of acquiring vans, excluding any amounts that the providers may have received in Federal, State, or local government assistance for such acquisition. The Department of Transportation will implement and oversee the vanpool pilot projects, and will report back to Congress on the costs, benefits, and efficiencies of the vanpool projects.

Finally, H.R. 6052, the "Saving Energy Through Public Transportation Act of 2008," increases the Federal share for additional parking facilities at end-of-line fixed guideway stations. This provision increases the total number of transit commuters who will have access to those facilities.

Public transportation use in all of its forms—bus, rail, vanpool, ferry, streetcar, and subway ridership to name a few—saves fuel, reduces emissions, and saves money. The direct petroleum savings attributable to current public transportation use in the United States is 1.4 billion gallons per year. When the secondary effects of transit availability on travel are also taken into account, the equivalent of 4.2 billion gallons of gasoline is saved annually—more than 11 million gallons of gasoline per day.

Increasing public transportation use by providing incentives for commuters to choose transit options, thereby reducing their transpor-

tation-related energy consumption and reliance on foreign oil, as well as decreasing their greenhouse gas emissions, is a priority of this Congress.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass this important legislation.

HONORING WILLIAM KEARNEY OF
LAKE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Bill Kearney, who is being honored by the Lakeside Wellness Foundation for his years of service to the citizens of Lake County. Mr. Kearney is being recognized for his outstanding contributions to Sutter Lakeside Hospital as well as the community at large.

Bill is deservedly known as "Mr. Community." Having previously served in the US Army in both Korea and Vietnam, he has since served on the Board of Sutter Lakeside since 1999 and has been President of the Board since 2005. He has given countless hours to the hospital over the years and always goes the extra mile, be it helping with physician recruitment or serving as a community ambassador. He also serves as the emcee of the annual Lake County Stars awards, lending his considerable charm and wit to what is always a memorable evening.

Mr. Kearney is not only a hero in the Lake County non-profit and health care communities, but a business leader as well. He owns two successful pharmacies and hosts a radio show discussing health issues. Bill is equally generous with his time and abilities in the business community. He has served two terms as President of the Chamber of Commerce and is affiliated with all local service organizations. He also leads the co-op for small pharmacies in Northern California.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, it is my distinct pleasure to recognize Bill Kearney for his many years of service. He has been a model citizen and leader in Lake County, his presence has enriched the lives of everyone in our community and I am honored to call him a friend. I join his wife Dana, four children and twelve grandchildren in wishing him continued success and fulfillment.

HONORING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
FOUNDING OF ISRAEL

HON. DANIEL LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Mr. LIPINSKI. Madam Speaker, sixty years ago today, as the world was still recovering from the horrors of the Second World War and the devastation of the Holocaust, the modern state of Israel was founded.

In the sixty years since its founding, Israel has overcome numerous security threats while serving as a model democracy in the Middle East and a beacon of freedom in the region. Importantly, Israel has also been one of America's strongest and most steadfast allies.